

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-05

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SUBJECT: LEONE EXPRESSES HIS CONCERNS

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT LEONE HAS, THROUGH AN UNNAMED INTERMEDIARY, GIVEN WHAT AMOUNTS TO A PRESS INTERVIEW (CORRIERE DELLA SERA, 28 AUGUST) EXPRESSING HIS GRAVE CONCERN OVER THE DANGERS TO THE COUNTRY POSED BY A WIDE RANGE OF INSTITUTIONAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. LEONE ALSO STATES THAT HE IS INCLINED TO SEND A MESSAGE TO PARLIAMENT ABOUT THE END OF SEPTEMBER TO FOCUS PUBLIC OPINION ON THE THINGS WHICH MUST BE DONE. THE "INTERVIEW" IS CLEARLY A TRIAL BALLOON FOR A CONTEMPLATED EFFORT TO INFLUENCE EVENTS BY USING HIS OFFICE TO LEAD PUBLIC OPINION. IT WOULD BE A COURAGEOUS AND UNPRECEDENTED INITIATIVE FOR AN ITALIAN PRESIDENT, WHO HAS LITTLE MORE THAN CEREMONIAL POWERS. FIRST REACTIONS TO THE INTERVIEW ARE LIKELY TO INDUCE LEONE TO PROCEED. END SUMMARY.

1. LEONE'S BASIC CONCERN IS THE ATTITUDE HE SEES IN THE COUNTRY OF "SURRENDER" AND "RESIGNATION" IN THE FACE OF THE GREAT PROBLEMS FACING IT. HE EXPRESSES THIS CONCERN SEVERAL TIMES

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IN THE "INTERVIEW", AND SAYS TWICE THAT THE THEME OF A MESSAGE

HE CONTEMPLATES SENDING TO PARLIAMENT ABOUT THE END OF SEPTEMBER MUST BE THE "REFUTATION OF FATALISM AND SCEPTICISM". HE REPEATS WHAT HE SAID IN A SPEECH ON THE RESISTANCE: "IT IS NECESSARY TO DELINEATE AN IMAGE OF OUR FUTURE CAPABLE OF WINNING THE CONFIDENCE OF THE COUNTRY."

2. SPECIFICALLY, LEONE INDICATES THE NEED FINALLY TO PROVIDE THE SUPPORTING LEGISLATION INDICATED BY THE CONSTITUTION ON TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS: THE STILL UNDEFINED POWERS OF THE PRIME MINISTER, AND THE REGULATION OF THE RIGHT TO STRIKE. FOR LACK OF CLEARLY DEFINED AUTHORITY, THE PRIME MINISTER IS UNABLE TO COORDINATE THE WORK OF THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES, AS IS HIS DUTY. FOR LACK OF REGULATION OF THE RIGHT TO STRIKE, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO PUBLIC SERVICES, OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS ARE IMPEDED. TO FIND A SOLUTION "IS PERHAPS A QUESTION OF LIFE AND DEATH FOR THE ECONOMIC AND CIVIL SURVIVAL OF THE COUNTRY...."

3. LEONE ALSO LAID STRONG EMPHASIS ON THE NEED TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THE "PLAGUE OF ABSENTEEISM" IN WHICH ITALY IS THE "SAD CHAMPION". HE BALANCED HIS SALLIES AT LABOR BY DEPLORING BUSINESSMEN'S RESIGNATION IN THE FACE OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS. THEY HAVE LOST "THEIR TASTE FOR RISK", DO NOT INVEST, AND "ARE TEMPTED" TO TRANSFER THEIR CAPITAL AND VENTURES ABROAD.

4. OTHER PROBLEMS TOUCHED ON BY LEONE ARE: THE NEED TO GET ACTION WITHIN THE BUREAUCRACY, JUSTICE, HOUSING, HOSPITALS AND UNEMPLOYMENT. "WHEN WILL IT BE UNDERSTOOD THAT ENDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT ALSO LEADS TO DEGRADATION, CLIENTELISM, CORRUPTION, AND RESIGNATION?"

5. IN ANTICIPATION OF POTENTIAL CRITICISM THAT SPEAKING OUT WENT BEYOND HIS CONSTITUTIONAL POWER, LEONE CITES HIS OBLIGATION TO PROTECT THE CONSTITUTION. HE DOES NOT HOLD HIS OFFICE TO "SIGN HIS NAME THOUSANDS OF TIMES, OR PRESIDE AT CELEBRATIONS. SOME THINK SILICE PROTECTS THE INSTITUTIONS, INSTEAD IT IS ENSARING (INSIDIANDO) THEM." HE FORESTALLS ALSO ANY INTERPRETATION THAT HE IS UNHAPPY WITH THE MORO GOVERNMENT BY SPECIFICALLY PRAISING MORO, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER LA LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MALFA, AND TREASURY MINISTER COLOMBO.

6. COMMENT: THE "INTERVIEW" IS CLEARLY A TRIAL BALLOON BY LEONE FOR A CONTEMPLATED EFFORT TO INFLUENCE EVENTS THROUGH PUBLIC OPINION. IT WOULD BE A COURAGEOUS AND UNPRECEDENTED INITIATIVE FOR AN ITALIAN PRESIDENT, WHO HAS LITTLE MORE THAN CEREMONIAL POWERS. THE FIRST REACTIONS TO IT ARE LIKELY TO ENCOURAGE HIM. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, AND

REPUBLICANS ARE UNRESERVEDLY POSITIVE. SOCIALIST AND LABOR REACTION IS SHARPLY NEGATIVE. THE COMMUNIST PARTY IS SO FAR RESPONDING WITH CAUTIOUS CRITICISM TO WHAT LEONE SAID, BUT SEEMS CLEARLY DISTURBED AT THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE WILL SUCCEED IN LEADING PUBLIC OPINION. IT EXPRESSES DECISIVE OPPOSITION TO ANY INCREASE IN PRESIDENTIAL POWER. SOME OBSERVERS NOTE THAT THE CONSTITUTION REQUIRES THAT PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES TO PARLIAMENT MUST BEAR THE SIGNATURE OF THE PRIME MINISTER, AND SPECULATE ABOUT MORO'S ATTITUDE. WE DOUBT WHETHER THIS WILL PROVE TO BE A PROBLEM. VOLPE

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